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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000833

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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, AND EUR/SCE, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN FOR  
DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: A/S FRIED PRESSES KOSOVO LEADERS TO  
DEMONSTRATE READINESS FOR STATUS OUTCOME

Classified By: COM TINA S. KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In Pristina September 26-28, EUR A/S Fried met separately with PM Ceku, President Sejdiu and the Unity Team and assured them of the USG's seriousness in pursuing the status process to its logical end, but stressed that the Kosovar Albanian leadership must show itself worthy of independence. Kosovars, he said, will have to accept Special Envoy Ahtisaari's negotiated settlement and explain the reasons and benefits of decentralization clearly to their public. At a joint press conference with visiting German MFA PolDir Schaeffer, Fried strongly condemned violence against Serbs, saying such attacks were not acts of patriotism but of cowardice, and that nationalism of all varieties had only brought misery to the Balkans. At a lunch with local Contact Group reps, Fried discussed the security situation in the divided city of Mitrovica, especially in the post-status period, and all agreed that a more visible KFOR presence in the north would help. KFOR Commander LTG Kather told Fried he could manage the situation in the Serb north, but dealing with any widespread violence in the status aftermath would be difficult. SRSG Ruecker welcomed Fried's message of keeping the status timeline on track, but observed that Serbian elections, if definitely scheduled for December, could cause this timeline to slip. Fried acknowledged this, but cautioned against the "slippery slope" of timing the independence issue around the Serbian electoral calendar. Ruecker strongly agreed.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY (cont'd). Moderate Kosovo Serb leaders appreciated Fried's candor that independence was coming, though SLKM leader Ivanovic argued the process should be delayed, and criticized Serbian PM Kostunica directly for not caring about the everyday problems of Kosovo Serbs. Fried promised USG commitment to see decentralization provisions implemented and the Kosovo Serb heritage protected. Fried also met with an impressive group of young Albanian, Serb and non-Serb minority professionals, who chose to speak to him in Serbian and who expressed their strong support for a multi-ethnic Kosovo. End Summary.

Message to Kosovo Albanians Leaders: Show That You Are Worthy of Independence

¶3. (C) EUR A/S Daniel Fried, in Pristina September 26-28, told PM Ceku and President Sejdiu separately that the U.S. "is serious" about the final status outcome being independence, but that these leaders need to be equally serious in demonstrating Kosovo's worthiness. At a subsequent meeting with the Unity Team, he urged the Kosovo Albanian leadership to embrace whatever package UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari presents, to educate their public on the key decentralization issue, to reject violence against Serbs (specifically to arrest and prosecute offenders), and not to respond to provocations, especially in the post-status period.

¶4. (C) All leaders claimed to understand the message and all were grateful for U.S. support. PM Ceku assessed that Serbs in the north would most likely respond to independence by declaring secession and committing acts of political defiance, but said he was working with KFOR and UNMIK to address this potential scenario. He and President Sejdiu, like other members of the Unity Team, were seized with the timing of the status process and argued that any delay would only play into Belgrade's hands. Opposition leader Thaci, the only Unity Team member aside from Sejdiu to speak at the joint meeting, said he was committed to working with Ahtisaari and the Contact Group and that his party would secure implementation of the agreement, but accused the Kosovo government of corruption and involvement in organized crime, and faulted UNMIK for tolerating it. Fried asked these leaders not to fixate on a timeline and not to play politics with final status, but to focus instead on the work still to be done. He conveyed that the end of 2006 would see "greater clarity" on the status issue and that the U.S. would not leave Kosovar leaders without support.

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Internationals: Status Timing, Reaction of Serb North Dominate Discussion

¶5. (C) SRSR Ruecker welcomed Fried's tough message to Belgrade on independence and the Contact Group's reaffirmation via its recent ministerial statement that it would continue to seek a negotiated solution by the end of 2006. He observed, however, that if Serbian elections were held in December the CG would likely have to delay action by a matter of weeks or possibly months. (German MFA PolDir Schaeffer, also in Pristina, made this same point at a private breakfast with Fried.) Fried underscored to Ruecker (as well as Schaeffer) that until Belgrade made a firm announcement, there was no basis on which to alter the CG's timeline; even after any Serb announcement, Fried said, there would have to be careful evaluation of the implications of delay and the "slippery slope" of waiting yet again for government formation in Serbia. Asked about what the Serb north, especially north Mitrovica, would do after the declaration of final status, Ruecker said the Serbs there could declare secession or take other political action, but the international community would reject such a move. The enhanced KFOR presence and continuation of the dialogue with the Serb community, he maintained, would help keep this reaction in check. Deputy SRSR Schook noted the solution to the problem was essentially in Belgrade; all UNMIK and KFOR could do was prevent an escalation of violence. Schook feared that if any Albanian in north Mitrovica was displaced due to violence, Albanians could exact revenge on the vulnerable Serb enclaves in the south -- a fear also articulated by UNMIK Mitrovica rep Jerry Gallucci at a later meeting.

¶6. (C) Discussion of Mitrovica dominated a lunch with local Contact Group reps and dinner with COMKFOR LTG Kather. CG reps thought an increased KFOR presence would improve the security situation and that moderate Kosovo Serb leaders should be urged not to do anything precipitous, since life as refugees in Serbia would be decidedly worse than any other

alternative. All agreed that Belgrade, the main factor influencing Kosovo Serbs, still had not decided how to react in the post-status environment, but that its desire to avoid an exodus of Serb refugees into Serbia would be an incentive not to employ a "burn the house down" strategy in northern Kosovo. LTG Kather was confident he could manage threats in Mitrovica and the Serb north and noted that Germany had just approved an extension of the German ORF troops at Camp Nothing Hill (in northern Kosovo) until the end of October, and might push that even further into late December. Kather admitted, however, that he was unsure of KFOR's ability to address multiple threats throughout Kosovo should there be widespread violence. Kather also said that his coordination with UNMIK civpol had "improved immeasurably" in recent weeks with the arrival of a new civpol commander, UK national Steve Curtis (whom A/S Fried also met during his trip).

#### Moderate Serbs Appreciate Candor, Criticize Belgrade

¶7. (C) Meeting with three moderate Kosovo Serb leaders at UNMIK Mitrovica HQ, Fried delivered a frank message that independence was coming. At the same time, he affirmed U.S. resolve to protect the Kosovo Serb heritage, to press for implementation of decentralization provisions, and to remain engaged. These leaders -- Oliver Ivanovic, Randjel Nojkic and Slobodan Petrovic -- said they appreciated Fried's candor, though Ivanovic maintained that the status decision should be delayed. Fried countered that delay would bring no benefit to anyone, and especially not to the Serbs; there was no return to the past and no guarantee for Serb rights outside a status settlement. Ivanovic complained that PM Ceku and other Albanian leaders could not be trusted; they say the right things, he noted, but were uninterested in providing concrete assistance in Serb areas or punishing those who attack Serbs, citing the recent grenade attack in Klina that injured four elderly returnees. Interestingly, all three Serbs focused on Belgrade (not Pristina) as their

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biggest problem: Nojkic pointed an accusatory finger at "Mr. Kostunica and his politics" which he said focused only on the north (not the larger Serb community in the south) and created divisions among Kosovo Serbs. Petrovic, the liberal-minded leader of a small new Kosovo Serb party, differed from his colleagues in asking Fried to find a solution "as soon as possible," agreeing that a delay would bring nothing good. Ivanovic concluded that Belgrade's "theoretical" Kosovo was divorced from the reality of Kosovo Serbs: it wants them to stay, but doesn't allow participation in Kosovar institutions.

#### Hope for a Multiethnic Future

¶8. (SBU) At a USOP-sponsored roundtable, Fried met ten young Kosovo Albanian, Serb and non-Serb minority professionals, who all chose to speak to him in Serbian (or English) and who all professed their hope for a multi-ethnic Kosovo. Each had a story to tell, whether in the business, NGO or international sphere, that related to this hope. Some recounted how the poor state of the economy made the situation all the more difficult and argued for greater economic aid from the U.S. and other donors. Fried acknowledged these obstacles, but argued that foreign investment was a far greater contributor to prosperity than assistance. Resolution of final status, he went on, would create conditions that would allow for greater investment and IFI involvement. He saluted the participants for their initiative to work toward a better Kosovo.

#### Press with German MFA PolDir

¶9. (SBU) Fried and visiting German MFA PolDir Schaeffer gave a joint press conference at UNMIK HQ at which they condemned nationalism of all kinds and insisted that violence must have no part in a multi-ethnic Kosovo. Fried said nationalism had created only destruction and misery for the

Balkans, while Schaeffer spoke of German nationalism wreaking havoc upon Europe during World War II. Violence against Serbs, Fried said, was not an act of patriotism, but one of cowardice. Both Fried and Schaeffer reaffirmed the Contact Group's intent to seek a negotiated settlement by the end of the year. Schaeffer said outright that all the countries of the Balkans would one day be members of the EU.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: A/S Fried's visit afforded a high-level opportunity not only to reassure the Kosovar Albanian leaders of U.S. commitment to see the final status process to its end, but to urge them to follow through on their work and present a serious face to the international community. This is a message we will work to amplify in the next few weeks in our engagement with the Unity Team and the political parties.

¶11. (U) A/S Fried has cleared this message.

¶12. (U) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable for release in its entirety to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.  
KAIDANOW